

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1 - 10 (Cancelled).

11. (Withdrawn) A method for preparing ~~[[a]]~~ the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask of claim 13 by performing a series of pattern-forming steps comprising ~~such as~~ a step for forming a resist layer on a photomask blank, a step for exposing and patterning said resist layer, a developing step, a step for etching said photomask blank and a step for removing the resist layer, wherein the method is characterized in that patterns, including coarse and dense portions of the patterns, to be transferred onto a wafer are formed on said photomask blank for the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask according to a dry-etching method comprising dry-etching a metal thin film as a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film, wherein the method is characterized by using, as an etching gas, a mixed gas including (a) a reactive ion etching gas, which contains an oxygen-containing gas and a halogen-containing gas, and (b) a reducing gas added to the gas component (a), in the process for dry-etching the metal thin film to thus give a photomask.

12. (Withdrawn) A method for preparing ~~[[a]]~~ the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask of claim 14 by performing a series of pattern-forming steps comprising ~~such as~~ a step for forming a resist layer on a photomask blank, a step for exposing and patterning said resist layer, a

developing step, a step for etching said photomask blank and a step for removing the resist layer, wherein the method is characterized in that patterns, including coarse and dense portions of the patterns, to be transferred onto a wafer are formed on said photomask blank for the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask according to a dry-etching method comprising dry-etching a metal thin film as a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film, wherein the method is characterized by using, as an etching gas, a mixed gas including (a) a reactive ion etching gas, which contains an oxygen-containing gas and a halogen-containing gas, and (b) a reducing gas added to the gas component (a), in the process for dry-etching the metal thin film, wherein said metal thin film is a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film consisting of a chromium film, a chromium oxide film, a chromium nitride film, chromium oxynitride film, chromium fluoride film or a laminated film thereof to thus give a photomask.

13. (Currently Amended) A chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask comprising coarse and dense patterns coexisting in a plane which is prepared by performing a series of pattern-forming steps including ~~such as~~ a step for forming a resist layer on a photomask blank, a step for exposing and patterning said resist layer, a developing step, a step for etching said photomask blank and a step for removing said resist layer, wherein the photomask is characterized in that patterns to be transferred onto a wafer are formed on said photomask blank for the chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask according to a dry-etching method comprising dry-etching ~~a metal thin film as a~~

chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film utilizing , ~~wherein the method is characterized by using, as an etching gas[[.]]~~ comprised of a mixed gas including (a) a reactive ion etching gas, which contains an oxygen-containing gas and a halogen-containing gas, and (b) a reducing gas added to the gas component (a); ~~in the process for dry etching the metal thin film.~~

14. (Currently Amended) ~~[[A]]~~ The chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift photomask of claim 13 ~~which is prepared by performing a series of pattern-forming steps such as a step for forming a resist layer on a photomask blank, a step for exposing and patterning said resist layer, a developing step, a step for etching said photomask blank and a step for removing said resist layer, wherein the photomask is characterized in that patterns to be transferred onto a wafer are formed on said photomask blank for the chromium-containing half tone phase-shift photomask according to a dry etching method comprising dry etching a metal thin film as a chromium-containing half tone phase shift film, wherein the method is characterized by using, as an etching gas, a mixed gas including (a) a reactive ion etching gas, which contains an oxygen-containing gas and a halogen-containing gas, and (b) a reducing gas added to the gas component (a), in the process for dry etching the metal thin film, wherein said metal thin film is a chromium-containing half-tone phase-shift film~~ consists ~~consisting of~~ a chromium film, a chromium oxide film, a chromium nitride film, chromium oxynitride film, chromium fluoride film or a laminated film thereof.

Claims 15 - 20 (Cancelled).